



Background and Rationale

In May 2018, commitments to terminate the dangerous cycles between food insecurity and violent conflict were made at the highest level of policymaking when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted **Resolution 2417**.¹

This called on all parties to armed conflict to comply with relevant measures in international humanitarian law (IHL) which oblige them to protect civilian infrastructure critical for the proper functioning of food production and supply systems. Resolution 2417 also requested the UN Secretary-General to “provide information” on humanitarian situations “including the risk of famine and food insecurity in countries with armed conflict.”

Implementation of Resolution 2417 requires granular information of the connections between conflict and hunger. Humanitarian aid organisations responding to food insecurity and those conducting advocacy to raise awareness of the links between conflict and food insecurity require detailed information. However, according to the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organization’s assessment in 2017, “There is no existing study that convincingly disentangles or quantifies [...the...] impacts of conflict” on food insecurity and such data gaps remain today. Similarly sparse are understandings of how and to what extent different situations of armed conflict affect food security.

Insecurity Insight’s Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict (FIVC) project aims to help fill these knowledge deficits and, in a policy and action-oriented manner, contribute to the evidence base for:

- **Advocacy on the root causes of food insecurity;**
- **Conversations with conflict parties regarding the foreseeable consequences of military action on food security;**
- **Predicting where and when conflict may be a significant factor in deteriorating access to food.**

The FIVC project compiles **FIVC datasets** of conflict events that are likely to have had a direct impact on food production or distribution. The dataset uses open-source research methods and works with contributions from aid sector partner agencies.

The categorisation of events within the dataset is based on a typology of ‘Violent Actions’ developed by **Linares Quero et al.** and included in the **Monitoring and Evaluation of Food Insecurity in Conflict (MEFIC) Framework** which is explained below.

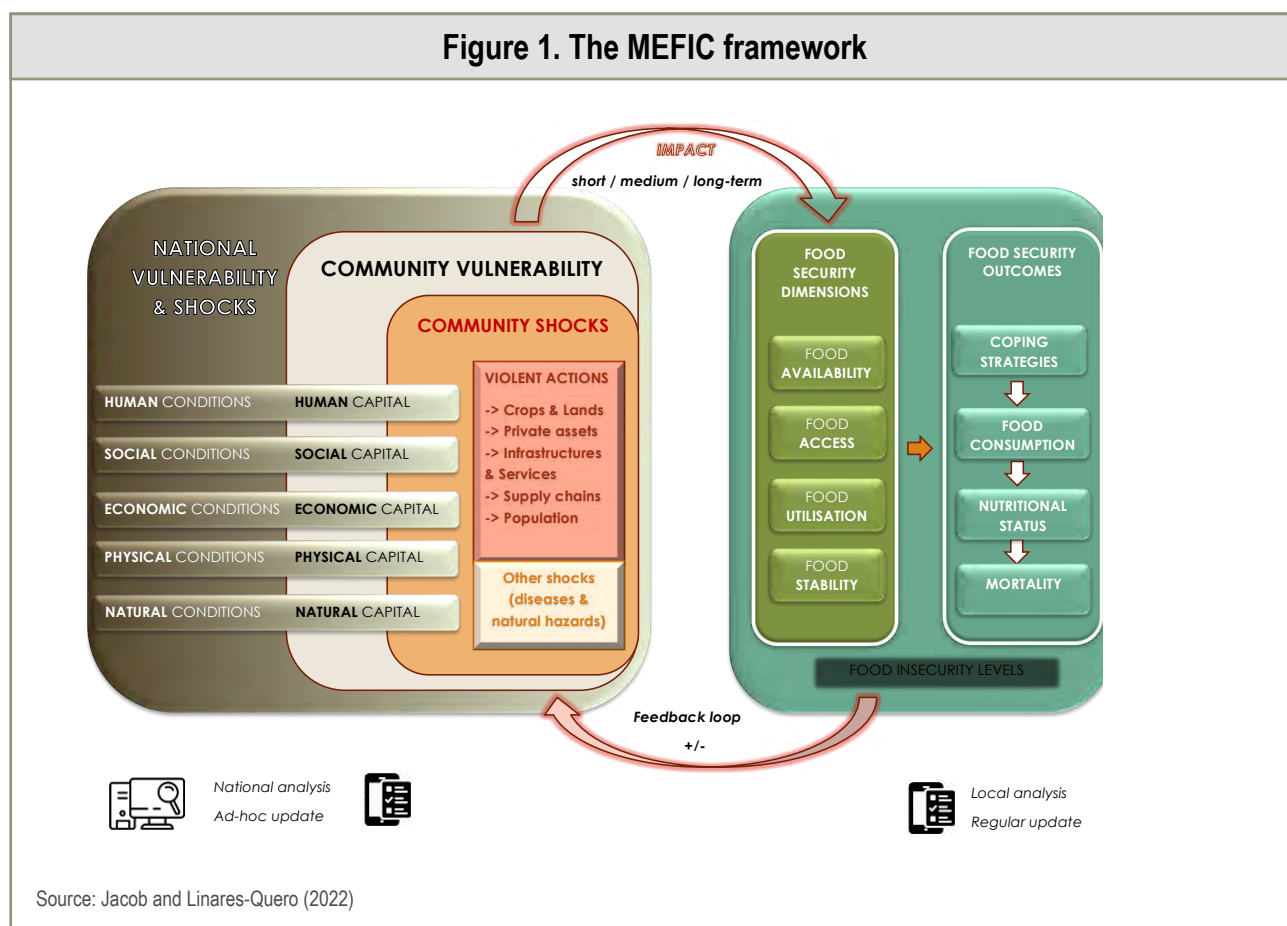
Currently Available FIVC Reports

- **Ethiopia** (covering 2020-2022); **Somalia** (covering 2017 to 2022) and **Syria** (covering 2017 to 2022)

The Monitoring and Evaluation of Food Insecurity in Conflict (MEFIC) Framework

The MEFIC framework provides an analytical model to understand how violent actions during armed conflict contribute to food insecurity. It does so by building on one of the most widely deployed food insecurity analytical frameworks: **the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)**. The FAO first developed this in 2004 for use in Somalia. In short, it is an **“approach to consolidate wide-ranging evidence to classify the severity and magnitude”** of food insecurity and malnutrition and to identify their **“key drivers”**. The IPC framework has significantly advanced understandings of food insecurity. However, it does not include a specific focus on armed conflict. The MEFIC framework has been designed to address this gap by highlighting the processes through which armed conflict creates and contributes to food insecurity. The MEFIC framework is visualised in Figure 1 and based on a classification developed by **Linares Quero, Pérez de Armiño and Sánchez Montero (2023)**.

Violent Actions are a specific element within this framework and include looting of food, the destruction of livestock and farmland and obstruction of food production and transport processes (see page 3 for a detailed outline of violent actions).



Unlike other food security frameworks, the MEFIC framework identifies specific categories of violent actions exhibited at the community level during armed conflicts. These produce food security outcomes via feedback loops in interaction with national vulnerability shocks such as natural disasters and economic downturns. **These violent actions are classified at two levels: (a) the target or object of attack, and (b) the pattern of violent action or behaviour.**

Targets or Objects of Attack

1. **Crops and Lands:** Pastures, forests, and fishing areas and, in general, natural productive areas.
2. **Infrastructure and Basic Services:** Water resources, health centres, power infrastructure and financial services.
3. **Private Assets:** This category includes property and livelihoods, while differentiating between productive assets (including agricultural assets and livestock) and non-productive assets (such as housing/shelter, cooking fuel, and vehicles and money).
4. **Food Supply Chains:** The food supply chains category distinguishes storage facilities (including food processing facilities), markets, shops, food distribution infrastructure (notably transportation, roads, ports and airports).
5. **Population:** This may be either urban or rural and includes humanitarian workers responsible for food assistance, women and children, and minority groups.

Patterns of Violent Action or Behaviour

1. **Destruction:** Examples include burning, bombing transport infrastructure, and attacks on markets and warehouses.
2. **Looting or Robbery:** Examples include looting of productive inputs or stealing money.
3. **Blocking Access and Dispossession:** This includes the placing of mines on agricultural land, preventing transhumance by shepherds, besieging towns, occupying or closing infrastructure, dispossessing people of their lands, and blocking access to humanitarian aid.
4. **Contamination:** Examples include the poisoning or contamination of water wells.
5. **Violations of the Integrity or Freedom of the Population:** Examples include indiscriminate attacks, executions, selective kidnappings, illegal detention, intimidation, torture and sexual assault. All of these have psychological and physical impacts reducing the efficiency which individuals responsible for the production and distribution of food can carry out these tasks.

The Interaction of Violent Actions with National Vulnerability and Shocks

In the MEFIC framework, the violent actions outlined above create shocks at the community level (the first of the five pillars in Figure 1). Combined, these community level shocks reduce levels of human, social, economic, physical and natural capital available to individuals. In turn, this produces an overall level of community vulnerability to food insecurity (the second pillar in Figure 1).

The level of community vulnerability interacts simultaneously with “national vulnerability and shocks” (the third pillar in Figure 1). These consist of the prevailing human, social, economic, physical and natural conditions. For example, a drought could interact negatively to further the impacts of violent actions produced by armed conflict (e.g. the unworkability of land due to a lack of rain could be furthered by landmines making it unsafe to use). These interactions have implications for food security; levels of food availability, access, utilisation, and stability are dependent on the extent of violent actions produced by armed conflict, community vulnerability, and national vulnerability and shocks (see the fourth pillar in Figure 1). Combined, these factors produce food security outcomes (the final pillar), such as the coping strategies individuals implement, how much food they consume, their nutritional status and, ultimately, whether they can survive. The processes occurring within these five pillars interact constantly. This has cumulative impacts producing feedback loops undermining the food security for individuals.

The Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict (FIVC) Datasets

The **FIVC datasets** are based on the MEFIC framework categorisation of violent actions and provides data on the ‘**Violent Actions**’ defined within the framework. Insecurity Insight’s FIVC datasets focus on these ‘Violent Actions’ on the belief that addressing these can contribute to preventing and mitigating the impact of conflict and food security through changes in operational planning and the conduct of operations among conflict parties.

They are a basis for engagement with partner forces and are important for monitoring, learning, and the application of lessons learned and addressing harm done. They also include an emphasis on humanitarian access to ensure that humanitarian organisations can access affected people and that people can reach humanitarian assistance. Such emphasis is critical to preventing and mitigating conflict-induced hunger.

Given practical limitations of data collection in conflict zones, the dataset is not a representative sample of all violent conflict actions impacting food insecurity. This is especially so given that many impacts of conflict on food insecurity occur over a long-term period and cannot easily be recorded as is the case with the accumulated impacts of uncleared landmines and unexploded ordnances contaminating farmland, for example.

Nevertheless, the FIVC dataset provides an important resource for both humanitarian aid programming and for disentangling understandings of the links between conflict and food insecurity.

This document is published by Insecurity Insight - a Humanitarian to Humanitarian (**H2H**) organisation committed to the **Humanitarian Principles**. This document was developed with the financial assistance of the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation and the H2H Fund, which is supported by aid from the UK government. The opinions expressed in it do not reflect in any way the position of the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation, the H2H Network or the UK government, who are not responsible for either the content expressed in this document or its use.

Suggested citation: Insecurity Insight. 2023. ‘Data and information on conflict affecting food insecurity’ April 2023. Switzerland: Insecurity Insight. bit.ly/FoodMethodology

¹ Insecurity Insight follows the Rome Declaration of 1996 by defining food security as being present when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Conversely, food insecurity is considered to prevail when these conditions are absent.